

VZCZCXRO1309
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHOS #0256/01 1011202
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 111202Z APR 07
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8736
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 8562
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0266
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0246
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0245
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0247
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000256

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NOBEL LAUREATE SEES ELECTION TROUBLES, DELAYED
ELECTIONS

LAGOS 00000256 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a discussion with the Consul General, political activist Wole Soyinka and leading democracy advocate Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin said a group of opposition parties, coupled with civic organizations, had planned to publicly protest the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) lack of preparedness for the upcoming elections. Soyinka said Obasanjo had become disenchanted with Umaru Yar'Adua as presidential candidate and was exploring the possibility of replacing him with Ibrahim Babangida. Obasanjo was facing increased opposition from spurned governors in the South as well as National Assembly members and Senators, thereby reducing his options for postponing the elections. End summary.

¶2. (C) In a March 21 discussion with the Consul General, writer and political activist Wole Soyinka and democracy advocate Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin described the activities of a political opposition group. Soyinka said he attended a March 20 meeting of the Coalition of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) in Abuja, in which the group decided to move forward on two initiatives. First, senators from the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) agreed to advance a motion for the impeachment of President Obasanjo and Vice-President Atiku. Second, the member parties of the CNPP would start mass action against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The parties planned protests to pressure INEC to step up its preparations for the elections. (Comment: The dual impeachment strategy was scuttled when the Senate unexpectedly recessed in the wake of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) imbroglio. End Comment.)

¶3. (C) The INEC protests were required, said Soyinka, because INEC had proven unable to demonstrate a degree of preparedness for the elections. The CNPP had systematically reviewed each of INEC's statutory requirements for the elections schedule and concluded INEC was tardy and

unprepared on all counts, Soyinka stated. Logistically, INEC was similarly unprepared; even ballots had not yet been printed at this late date, he bemoaned.

Soyinka Explores Possible Scenarios

14. (C) Soyinka had been heavily involved in discussions regarding the elections, he recounted. The best-case scenario was one in which INEC carries on with elections as scheduled. However, even in this case there would be a hitch. There was no possibility that INEC would be sufficiently prepared to conduct credible elections on the April election dates, he reasoned. Whatever happened in April would fall far short of a commendable exercise, Soyinka concluded.

15. (C) Some observers thought President Obasanjo and INEC Commissioner Maurice Iwu would delay the election, arguing that, constitutionally, it was within INEC's purview to establish an alternate date given that INEC was unprepared to hold elections as scheduled. In so doing, Obasanjo might be tempted to reverse the order of the gubernatorial and presidential elections. President Obasanjo was likely apprehensive about Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governors in the south. These governors, such as Peter Odili from Rivers State and Cross River State Governor Donald Duke, were embittered by Obasanjo's handling of the PDP presidential nomination when they were cast aside for Katsina Governor Yar'Adua.

16. (C) In recent conversation, Soyinka said Duke confided he no longer held President Obasanjo in high esteem. Duke, who had been a favorite of Obasanjo and felt he was being groomed for higher office, said he always felt Obasanjo held the good of Nigeria at heart. After the PDP nomination and the events of the past few months, Duke's vision of President Obasanjo had transmogrified into the image of a selfish,

LAGOS 00000256 002.2 OF 003

megalomaniacal finagler who only did that which served his own interest. Soyinka observed that, were he given the opportunity, Duke would give Obasanjo a taste of his own medicine -- at the last second withdrawing his support from Obasanjo's candidate. (Comment: It is telling that someone like Duke, who has been careful to cultivate a good relationship with Obasanjo and definitely not cross the President, said this to one of Obasanjo's most vocal critics. This reveals the extent to which Duke feels aggrieved. Though he had not met him, Soyinka placed Odili in the same category as Duke. End Comment.)

17. (C) President Obasanjo was maneuvering to remain in office a bit longer, said Soyinka. But he had made a key mistake in alienating the National Assembly (NASS) and the Senate. In an overreaction to his third term defeat, Obasanjo had destroyed the reelection chances of many of the legislators who even supported the third term. But Obasanjo would need NASS and Senate support to extend his tenure in the event that elections were not held as scheduled, Soyinka explained. The CNPP interpreted the constitution to say that only the National Assembly could extend the president's tenure by declaring a state of emergency. According to Soyinka, President Obasanjo, having made enemies of much of the National Assembly, would face a difficult time remaining in office constitutionally.

Presidential Candidates Evaluated

18. (C) As a result, Soyinka continued, the National Assembly should be the focal point of CNPP's activities regarding the elections. The CNPP was engaged in persuading key people in the NASS and Senate to resist potential presidential pressure to declare a state of emergency, should that situation come

to pass. Soyinka said President Obasanjo was devising a new set of carrots and sticks to use at his discretion, should the need arise.

¶9. (C) Discussing Buhari, Soyinka said he felt nostalgia was impeding Nigerians from recalling Buhari's marred tenure as head of state. Buhari had somehow managed to recreate himself as an upright person. However, accused Soyinka, Buhari's government had carried out summary executions, engaged in favoritism toward the north, while Buhari averted his eyes from the corruption of those close to him. Buhari had also funneled money to the north at the expense of the south when he was head of the Petroleum Trust Fund, Soyinka said.

¶10. (C) Though he stood little chance in the election, Vice President Atiku was corrupt but not evil, Soyinka continued. Yar'Adua was a nobody who should be disqualified based on the manner in which he was anointed, Soyinka noted.

Yar'Adua Falls Out Of Favor, IBB Is A Possibility

¶11. (C) Nevertheless, President Obasanjo was getting increasingly uncomfortable with PDP presidential candidate Yar'Adua, Soyinka said. This had nothing to do with Yar'Adua's health. Rather, Obasanjo was the recipient of rumors that Yar'Adua was not as loyal to Obasanjo as he originally thought. Obasanjo was beginning to believe these rumors. As a result, President Obasanjo recently asked northern emirs to pressure Yar'Adua to drop out of the race, revealed Soyinka. The emirs, irked at not being consulted in the choice of presidential candidate in the first instance, gave Obasanjo the cold shoulder, said Soyinka. The emirs told the President if he wanted to remove Yar'adua, he would have to do it himself, according to Soyinka.

¶12. (C) Obasanjo might be thinking about getting rid of Yar'Adua, mused Soyinka, but there was no telling who would replace him. However, Obasanjo and former military ruler

LAGOS 00000256 003.4 OF 003

Ibrahim Babangida (IBB) had been speaking often, Soyinka noted. They had been engaged in discussions to the extent that Obasanjo invited IBB's wife, Miriam, to Aso Rock, to ask her to deliver the message to her husband that Obasanjo favored IBB as the replacement PDP presidential candidate. While IBB was probably interested in this proposition, said Soyinka, IBB was wary of Obasanjo's intentions. Obasanjo had played so many games that IBB thought this was simply one more tactic to sow confusion and delay the elections, suggested Soyinka. If IBB were able to shed the past, he possessed the ability and sense of history to be the best of an otherwise questionable lot of presidential candidates, Soyinka offered suprisingly.

¶13. (C) If the election does take place as scheduled, Soyinka noted the smartest thing would be for the PDP to allow opposition parties to win the gubernatorial races in some states. This would allow the PDP to win the presidential race and a majority of the gubernatorial seats. However, if the PDP should attempt to steal Lagos, Kano, or Abia State, the PDP's victory in the other races would be heavily disputed.

Comment

¶14. (C) Much of what Soyinka stated was second-hand information that he thought was credible. As with most members of the Nigerian intelligentsia, Soyinka is not enamored with any of the major candidates. For a long time, he has been less than thrilled with his old hunting partner: President Obasanjo. However, Soyinka has not boarded the opposition bandwagon to the extent that he would rather see anyone in office but Obasanjo. Soyinka probably has equal if

not more reservations about Buhari. At the end of the day, the prized author does not predict much of any election and he would not be surprised to see some shell game being played where, at the end of the day, either Obasanjo or IBB will head an interim arrangement after May 29. End comment.

BROWNE